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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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			AGR	COM	FRB	INT	LAB	TAR	TR	XMB					
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SUBJECT: Availability of Asian Communist Publications in the USSR

As the Department and the other agencies participating in the Embassy's publication procurement program are aware, it is possible to procure certain Asian Communist publications in the USSR. This despatch is submitted to provide background on the scope and limitations of such procurement.

In each major Soviet city there is one bookstore which specializes in books and other printed materials from the "Countries of Popular Democracy". In Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Riga and Minsk there are bookstores which handle only such literature. The Moscow outlet is bookstore No. 1 at 15 Gorky Street. The contents of these stores vary somewhat by geographical location. Thus the store in Kishenev, in the Moldavian SSR, contains little more than Rumanian and East German materials. Most such stores have at least a few Asian titles - often it seems for "representational purposes" more than any other. In cities where there are few Asian students or students of Asian languages, there are usually only a handful of Chinese art books to represent the oriental wedge of the Communist bloc.

The Moscow "foreign language bookstore" at 18 Kuznetski Most, which specializes in Soviet publications in English, French, Spanish and German also maintains a few shelves of Chinese books, primarily devoted to art.

At bookstore No. 1 in Moscow and at bookstore No. 3 (16 Nevsky Prospekt) in Leningrad, there are separate sections of the stores dealing in Asian publications. At the "popular democracies" bookstore in Kiev and at bookstore No. 34 at Khabarovsk, there are also sizable areas devoted to Asian materials, although not organized as separate sections.

Only the store at Moscow has a particularly qualified sales staff. Two clerks are Chinese-speaking Russians and one appears to have some knowledge of Korean as well. This store also seems about the only place in the Soviet Union with any real supply of Mongolian materials. There are certain sharp

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contrasts in the availability of materials at Moscow from the various Asian Communist areas. There is a steady supply of North Vietnamese paperback materials of recent issue (within the last four months), about half of which are, however, either "export publications" in French, English or Russian, or are Vietnamese translations of the works of Marx, Engels or Lenin. However, almost all the Vietnamese material is political or economic in nature. North Korean materials are also reasonably current and arrive relatively steadily. There are less French or English materials and more childrens' literature. Mongolian materials arrive sporadically and are often more than six months old. They do include, however, economic, political and statistical materials. Chinese materials are far the worst in significance, especially when the size of the publishing efforts is considered. Arrivals average nine months to a year old and are heavily weighted toward expensive art editions and childrens' literature. Travel and photographic materials are also emphasized. Chinese books on the shelves seem to date primarily from 1953-55. These older books are often political in nature - including the works of Stalin in Chinese for example. This stock moves extremely slowly, if at all. It seems to serve in the field of decoration and dust collection rather than as a normal book stock. Chinese materials which have arrived during the last year contrast sharply with North Vietnamese and North Korean materials in the small proportion of political or economic materials. Volume Four of Mao's Works did, however, appear in Chinese, but quickly sold out. Clerks profess no knowledge of a forthcoming Russian edition. Recent Chinese accessions at bookstore No. 1 in Moscow have been primarily art books.

Attempts have been made to locate Chinese Communist publications of interest and value in Soviet libraries, such as the All Union State Library of Foreign Literature at 12 Razina Street, but if the card catalogs of such libraries truly reflect accessions, their holdings of recent titles are not significantly more impressive than a list of cumulative arrivals at bookstores.

The Embassy will continue to make every effort to expand its procurement of significant Asian Communist materials, particularly those published in the Russian language, on the assumption that some of these materials may be unavailable elsewhere. Any comments from the agencies participating in the Embassy's procurement program on the value and uniqueness of Asian materials presently being procured in the USSR would be appreciated.

For the Ambassador:

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